

Numbers 16:1–40
The Evils of Envy

Friday, July 5, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 16:1–40

Questions from the Scripture text: Who rise up against Moses and Aaron (v1–2)? What do they claim about them, and about themselves (v3)? What does Moses do (v4)? What does he say YHWH will do (v5)? What does he tell the rebels to do (v6–7)? What does he tell them YHWH has done for them (v8–10a)? What does he tell them they have now done, and actually against Whom (v10b–11)? Whom does Moses call, and how do they respond (v12–14)? How does Moses pray at this point (v15)? What does he tell the others to do (v16–17)? What do they do (v18)? Who gathers and where (v19a)? What happens there (v19b)? What does YHWH say to do, and that He will do (v20–21)? How do Moses and Aaron now pray (v22)? Now what does YHWH command (v23–24)? Now to whom does Moses go (v25)? Who else come? What does he tell whom to do (v26)? What do they do (v27)? What test does he announce (v28–30)? What will they understand (v30)? What happens (v31–33)? What do Israel now do (v34)? What happens, instead, to whom (v35)? Whom does YHWH command Moses to do what (v36–37)? For what purpose (v38)? What does Eleazar do (v39)? Of what was this a sign and a memorial (v40)?

What do envy and idolatry have in common? Numbers 16:1–40 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord’s Day. In these forty verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **envy and idolatry both reject the Lord**.

The danger of envy, v1–3. The Lord has just taught them the importance of holiness to Him (15:32–41), but our sin can horribly distort even the best things. In their envy, leaders from among all the people claim holiness as a ground upon which to reject the authority that the Lord has set over them! This is what comes from being infatuated with our holiness, rather than being driven by it to act in a holy way.

Intercession and instruction, v4–11. Moses falls on his face (v4), but not before the people as in 14:5. The rebels have forgotten two important things God is the One Who decides Who may come near Him (v5–7), and God has already exalted them even above others (v8–10a). When we complain against those whom YHWH has ordained, He Himself is the One against Whom we rebel (v11).

The blinding of envy, v12–15. Moses commands Dathan and Abiram to come up, but they refuse. Their envy blinds them to remember Egypt as if it were a promised land paradise (v13a) and to accuse Moses of tyranny, failure, and torture (v13b–14). This is so offensive that, for a moment, Moses turns from intercession to imprecation (v15).

Wrath and grace, v16–22. Apparently, Moses had partial information from the Lord. It seems that he knew that their offerings would be rejected, and Aaron’s would be accepted (v16–18). But then the sons of Korah rally the whole of Israel to their “cause” (v19a). At this point YHWH displays His glory (v19b) and declares His wrath (v20–21). For the third time, the Lord threatens to destroy all of Israel, and Moses (this time with Aaron) intercedes (for the rest of the congregation, not for Korah).

Reminders of Who God is, v23–40. What YHWH displays here is that He is the Creator. v30 literally says “And if YHWH creates a creation” using the “create” word that is used exclusively of God Himself. And YHWH shows that He is Who He is (v31–32). And lest you think that this was just an extraordinarily coincidental sink hole, the ground closes back up over itself (v33). Moses teaches us that this especially indicates Whom it is that they have rejected. YHWH Himself (end of v30). This is He to Whom we come in worship!

But He is not only the Creator of earth, but also the God of heaven. The Nadab/Abihu judgment is now repeated more than a hundredfold (v35). He is the holy and living God, Whom we approach in the worship that He has appointed. And it must be done only in the way that He has appointed! So the Lord commands that the bronze from these incense shovels be used to make a second bronze layer over the altar, (v37–38a). This is a sign and a memorial that the only safe and right way of coming near to YHWH is the way that He Himself has appointed (v38b–40). The Lord Jesus has brought us near to the true and living God. We ought to be amazed that we have been brought near through Him, and we ought to refuse to come near in any other way.

What is your attitude toward those whom the Lord has raised up as leaders in His church? In what manner has He given us to draw near? Through Whom? How else do people worship, and why shouldn’t you do that?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for bringing us near Yourself in Christ. Forgive us for envying others’ positions in Your church and for taking for granted who You are, who has brought us near. Now, in Your Son, You have made us priests unto You, so receive our thanksgiving and give us humility, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51B “From My Sins, O Hide Your Face” or TPH274 “Jesus, My Great High Priest”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Numbers 16, verses 1 through 40. These are God's words. Now, Cora the son of Izhar, the son of gohat, the son of Levi with dathan and debirim. The sons of eliab. On the son of palette sons of Reuben, took men. And they rose up before Moses with some of the children.

Israel. 250 liters of the congregation representatives of the congregation men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And said to them. You take too much upon yourselves. For all the congregation is Holy, every one of them. And Yahweh is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves?

Above the Assembly of Yahweh. So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face. And he spoke to Cora and to all his companies saying, Tomorrow morning, Yahweh will show, who is? Was Holy. And will cause him to come near to him. That one whom he chooses he will cause to come near to him.

Do the stick sensors. Go around all your company. Put fire in them and put incense in them. Before you all play tomorrow, and it'll be That the man whom Yahweh chooses is the Holy One. You take too much upon yourselves. You sons of Levi. Then Moses said to Cora.

Here. Now you sons of Levi? Is it a small thing? To you that the god of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel. To bring you near to himself to do the work of the Tabernacle of Yahweh. And to stand before the congregation to serve them. And that he has brought you near to himself you and all your brethren.

The sons of Levi with you. And are you seeking the priesthood? Also. Therefore, you and all your company? Are gathered together against Yahweh. What is Aaron? That you complain against him. And Moses sent to call Nathan into burim the sons of elihab. We will not come up. Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of the land?

A land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness. And that you should keep acting like a prince over us. Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey. Or give given us inheritance of fields and Vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men?

We will not come up. Then Moses was very angry and said, Do not respect their offering. I'm not taking one donkey from them. Nor have I hurt one of them. And Moses said to Cora. Tomorrow, you and all your company. Be present before y'all. You and they, as well as Aaron.

Let each take his sensor. And put incense in it, and each of you brings his sensor before, Yahweh. 250 sensors, both you And Aaron each with his sensor. Put the fire in it. Sorry. So every man took a sensor, put fire in it and laid incense on it and stood at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

And Cora gathered all the congregation against them. At the door of the Tabernacle meeting. Then the glory of Yahweh. Appeared to all the congregation. And he always spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment. Then they fell on their faces and said, Oh

God.

The god of the spirits of All Flesh. So one man. And you'd be angry with all the congregation. So, y'all spoke to Moses saying, Speak to the congregation saying. Get away from the tents of Korah death. Under beerum. Then Moses Rose and went to Nathan and Nibirum. Elders of Israel, followed him.

And he spoke to the congregation saying depart now. From the tenths of these wicked men. Touch nothing of theirs. Lest you be consumed in all their sins? So, they got away from around the tents of Cora, Nathan and Iberum. And Nathan and Embarum came out and stood at the door of their tents.

Wives their sons and their little children, And Moses said, By this, you shall know. Yahweh has sent me to do all these works. For I've not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally, like, All men. Or if they are visited by, The common fate of all men.

Then, Yahweh has not sent me. But if y'all like creates a new thing, And the Earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them. And they go down alive into the pit. Then you will understand. That these men have rejected Yahweh. Now, it came to pass as he finished speaking all these words.

That the ground split apart under them. And the Earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households. And all the men with Korra, with all their goods, So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit. The Earth closed over them. And they perished from among the assembly.

Than all Israel who are around them fled at their cry for they said lest the Earth swallow us up. Also. And the fire came out from Yahweh. And consumed, the 250 men. Who are offering incense. Then he always spoke to Moses saying. Tell Elliotts are the son of Aaron the priest.

To pick up the sensors out of the blaze for they are. Holy. And scatter. The fire, some distance away. The sensors of these men, who sinned against their own souls. Let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before. Yahweh. Therefore, they are.

Holy And this shall be assigned to the children of Israel. So layouts are the priest took the bronze sensors, which those who were burned up had presented. And they were hammered out as a covering on the altar. To be a memorial to the children of Israel. That no Outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before Yahweh.

That he might not become like Cora and his companions. Just as y'all had said to him. Through Moses.

So far, the reading of gods inspired. And Aaron twerk.

It is a wicked thing. Indeed, for men to be envious. Every one of us is greatly privileged. We've been created in the image of God. Movement created. With the capacitor to know him to know that. We are known by him. Draw near to him. And worship. To give him glory.

And when he appoints among men different positions. Different roles, different places. That is his prerogative. And no one who is made in His Image. Or even more than that in the church who has been redeemed. United to Christ. And dwelt by his Spirit. Made to sit with Christ in the Heavenly places.

Darn near to God through him. Has good cause to Envy. If they are not called by God and ordained into church office or Some other thing that men my Envy Envy is A dangerous thing. All of. The horrors of this chapter. Are caused by the Envy. yes, at first of a few men, But there is the Envy of the congregation as a whole, as well.

And the Judgment that falls upon the men. Falls indeed upon the congregation as a whole. For these 250. Or as verse 2 says, leaders of the congregation representatives of the congregation Men of renown. And so, they lose much here. All because of Envy.

There's a dangerous thing to be infatuated. With your Holiness. Rather than to be convicted by your Holiness, what I mean by that. You can look at what they say. In verse 3. Those who are gathered against Moses and Aaron. And they say all the congregation is Holy, every one of them and Yahweh is among them.

That's true enough. We just finished the end of chapter 15. When the people had not. Recognized. Or acted upon being consecrated unto God, as wholly unto God and particularly the man. On God's holy day even though he was separated among God's only people. Had profaned the Sabbath. And God had commanded him executed.

And then the Lord had given the Instruction about the tassels with the blue thread in the middle of the tassel. On the corners of the garments. To remind them what that each of them is Holy. Now, why did God consecrate them as holy? And why did God give them to be reminded that they were holy Was it so they could puff out their chests and go around and demand that they be treated as holy as any other person.

Was it so that they could do this and even raise themselves up? Against those whom God had set over them. We love the doctrine, the truth, the reality. Of the priesthood of all believers of the Holiness of all the saints. We just heard preached. On the As on the phrase, worthily of the Saints.

Romans 16 verse 2 on Wednesday night how even the youngest children of the congregation. God calls. Holy And are to be served and we are to have a regard for them. As for the Holy ones, as for the Saints, But how are we to respond to that by rejecting?

The doctrine of ordination. By rejecting. The offices of the Elder or the Deacon. By trying to put into those offices. People whom the Lord has not put into those offices because they are just as holy because they are believers. Of course, not. But that is the Temptation. And that's the way some people argue sometimes.

So, well, everyone should be able to be an elder. Everyone should be able to be a deacon. It's very dangerous. No God, consecrates us as holy So that we will live As those who are holy to him, So, we will devote ourselves to him. Of the word devoted. Is a good word for Holy or consecrated or Sanctified.

Mean, essentially the same thing. But envy in our heart. Causes us to respond. To the doctrine of being consecrated. Not by committing ourselves or devoting ourselves to God. But by setting ourselves over against others, even Over against those whom the Lord. Has set over us. And that's what the Envy does here.

A significant points in the chapter. This is what Moses says. Verse 11. You and all your company are gathered together against Yape. Is Aaron that you complain against him. And then the end of verse 30, when he's explaining. The sign of the not just opening up and swallowing Nathan and Nibirum and all who are theirs.

All that is theirs. But even more amazing than the pit opening up. Is that the Earth then once they are fallen into the pit closes back up over them. And he says, Then you will understand. That these men have rejected Yahweh. Here is the Problem with Envy, It forgets God.

It treats other people. And ourselves, as if it's just a two-part equation, it says I should have the same as you. But it forgets that God is the Who has put each of us in our places? And it's a rejection against God. Just like, we tell you, Sophia don't we?

That if you are. Trying to, Get your own way. Because you're not glad that mom is in charge or dad is in charge. That you're really saying that you're not glad that God is in charge. Because he's the one who put mom and dad in charge of the family.

Well, Envy makes the same mistake. It forgets God. And it Rebels against him.

It also blinds. To the good that God does through other men. Nathan and abirum. When Moses summons them and they say we will not come up. To which God responds doesn't he by making them go down. Into the pit. Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey?

That may be true that Egypt was very wealthy.

But it wasn't wealthy and productive for the Israelites. The milk and the honey. Were harvested on the back. So the Israelites as it were

A small thing that you so they were blinded. In their memory to what it was like in Egypt. To kill us in the wilderness. Now, whose fault was it that they were going to die in the wilderness. What does that sentence has been pronounced upon them? What's up? What's up?

Moses and Aaron's fault. No, it was the rebellion of the people of Israel. The people's own Rebellion was at fault.

And so they're blinded. To their own guilt and their dying in the wilderness. That you should keep acting like a prince over us. Moses had sacrificed himself. His whole life for them. Would have been much more pleasant to just Hang out in the wilderness. Be a Shepherd with his wife and his kids and Their little family where no one was bothering them.

In fact, Moses. I was very angry at this. Cries out to Yahweh, not to respect their offering.

Probable that in verse 4 when Moses fell on his face. He was praying on behalf of the people. That the Lord would not destroy them.

Chapter 16. It says when Moses heard it, he fell on his face. Doesn't say he fell on his face before the people. Like it said, back in chapter 14, They're the people we're going to execute him. and he had fallen on his face before the people. Here, it just says he fell on his face.

Which implies that he fell on his face before the Lord. And indeed. when Moses becomes angry. He cries out to the Lord, not to have respect. for their offering. he always tells Moses and Aaron. Get away from the congregation so I can consume them all in a moment.

So the third time, That the Lord has threatened to destroy all Israel. And start over with Moses. And this is the third time. That Moses intercedes. They've fallen their faces again. Verse 22. It's a parallel to verse four. They're back to interceding now. Oh God. The god of the spirits of All Flesh.

Show one man's sin and you be angry with. All the congregation. How much Moses has given up and he had taken nothing. He's not acting. There's a prince over them. And then they accuse him of. Plotting to put out the eyes of his political enemies. That may be the way that Many in the ancient near East.

Actually many in the history of the world.

I've dealt with their political enemies.

But we must be careful. Of our Envy. That we not envy. I suppose it's not difficult to imagine. That Nathan and iberum. Especially the way the chapter began. Actually thought this way about Moses. And so, They're forgot full of God and wrong, about God. The. Hostility of their hearts and their Envy.

Made them unjust and unfair. In their opinion of Moses and we could very easily fall into Thinking and feeling unjustly and unfairly. Towards people who are over us. We had a situation recently in the congregation. People got upset about something. In a way that At least to my judgment wasn't even.

Rational, With respect to the facts of what was going on. But there were individuals. Whom they painted as evil. And who ended up. Being threatened, not necessarily by our congregation. But they joined a Growing wave of Hostility against others.

It's very easy. if we are envious or Hostile in our Spirits. To judge others. Unjustly. We must be careful. Against.

The Lord. Rightly wrathful.

Again. That Cora and Nathan and dubirim. The people. Apparently have grown too accustomed. To the display of the Lord's glory. they ought to have repented then and there. Remember the first time that the glory of the Lord appeared, That. The Tabernacle everyone fell on their faces. Hear the glory of Yahweh appears to all the congregation.

They seem unfazed. Not until the Earth swallows up, Nathan and abirthe the People start to panic. All Israel who are around them fled at their cry. For they said bless the Earth swallow us up. Also,

And, They should have. As soon as Moses announced. what the contest would be? To come near with the fire pins. They probably should have remembered. Need to happen by who and decided that that's not exactly safe. And we we concede we yield Instead of actually coming near with the 250 pans in the incense and the fire, It should have reminded them that it's not Moses.

And Aaron who decides, who comes near? It's God. Who decides who comes near? But, They do it anyway. And it's the same thing. The fire comes out from Yahweh. Verse 35. And consume those 250. And so, a second layer of bronze the altar. Had already been overlaid with bronze.

But now, it gets a second layer made out of the very Bronze of this occasion. So they would be carrying around now. This reminder of nadab and abaihu. That would be on the outside of the bronze altar. That everyone could see. They couldn't see what was inside. The Tabernacle.

But they could see the bronze altar, that was outside the Tabernacle. Or outside. The. Tent. Of the Tabernacle.

And so the Lord reminds them of who he is. He is the Creator. He is the Holy One. He is the Lord. And that's what is behind.

Verse 30. When Moses says, but if Yahweh creates Our English translation says a new thing. It's actually a derivative of the word for create there and it's that word for creating out of nothing that is used of God. So that In Genesis 1 1. The word Barack. So he says if Yahweh creates a creation, And the Earth opens up its mouth.

In other words, If he displays himself, As the one who has made all things out of nothing. Creating a creation doing a creating work that he alone can do. And a new thing. Then you will be reminded. Then you will remember That it's the actual Creator who made all things out of nothing.

That you're rejecting. If you try to do things your own way in the church, Or if you try to. Elect the people you want. To be in charge. Of the church rather than Following God's word. to call and ordain whom God is calling in whom God puts In those places.

If we don't operate the church, the Lord's way. According to the Lord's word. We reject the Lord. Reject, the Lord himself. And so, the bronze alter be overlaid. Again, with another layer of bronze. To remind them who it is. That has created us, that has saved us. To whom we draw near in the worship.

Who operates his own? His own way. And this is still true today, we don't have a bronze altar. Yeah, there's No. Precious metal overlay. In our congregation that is from a time where God incinerated 250 leaders of the church. But we still draw near to the same Lord. And so we must take the worship as seriously.

And we should take his church as seriously. As he teaches us to do, In this chapter, Let's pray.

Father, thank you for Your? Thank you for your salvation. We see what we deserve and we are sobered. We see what you have given us to draw near to you and belong to you. And we are amazed. We thank you for calling us. Holy We pray that rather than being infatuated, Or impressed with ourselves.

That we are. Holy That we would be convicted and live, as Who are consecrated and devoted unto you. Thank you for giving your own son. The first place. Thank you for those whom you call. And ordain over us to help us. In the church. Help us all. Be grateful.

And rejoice. Over how good you have been to each one of us. For we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.